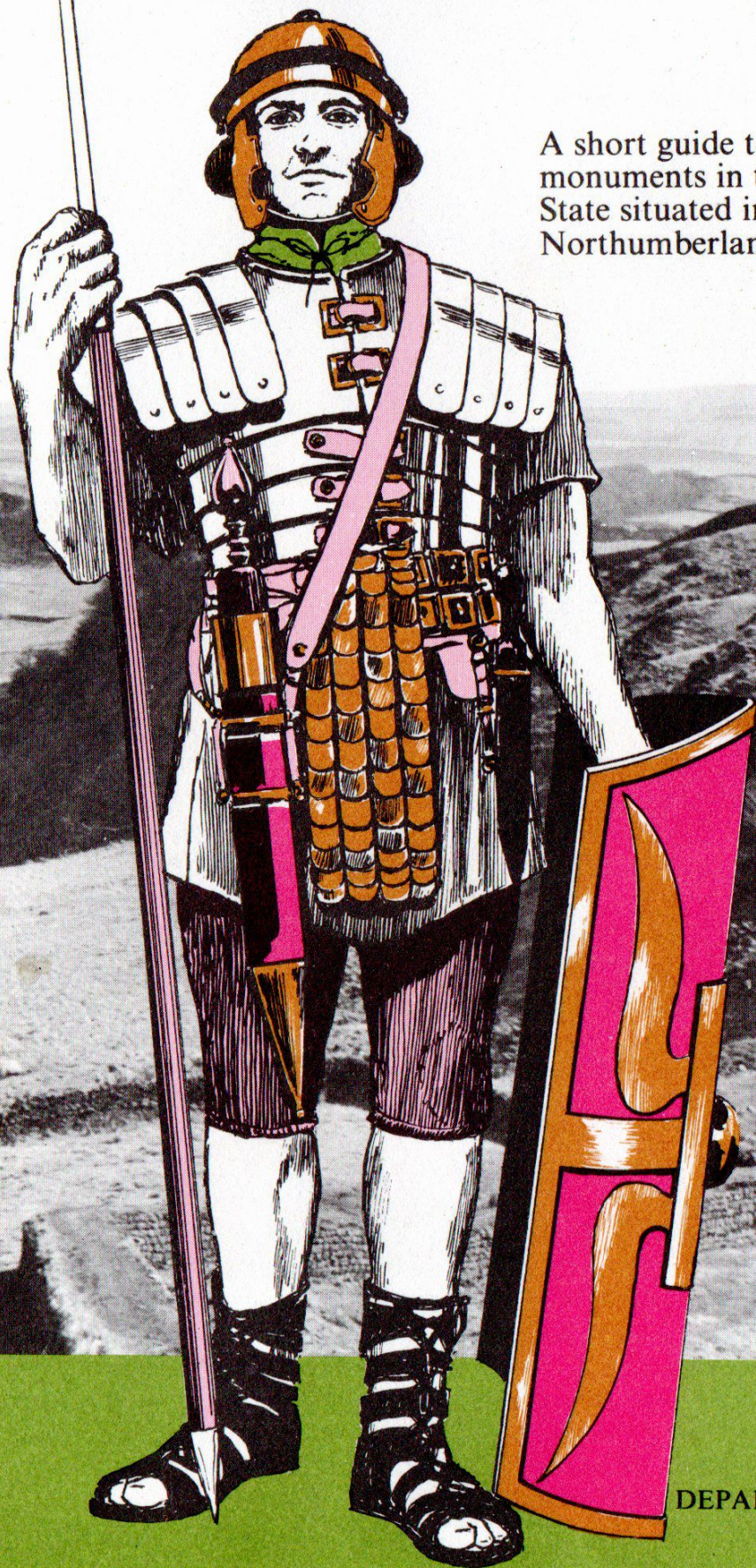


# HADRIAN'S WALL

A short guide to the Roman  
monuments in the care of the  
State situated in  
Northumberland and Cumbria



DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

12p net



Fountainhead known as the Corbridge Lion



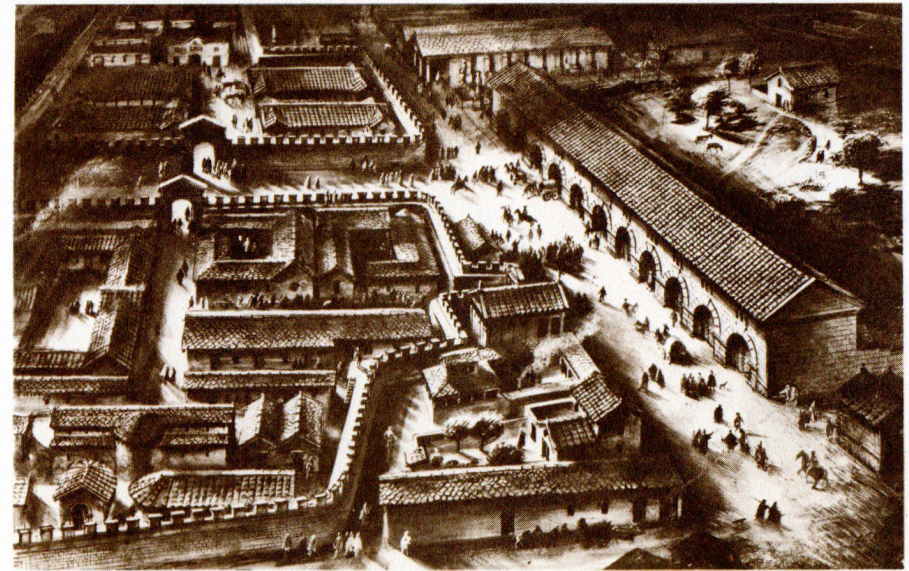
## CORBRIDGE ROMAN STATION

The earliest Roman military base in the Corbridge area was probably built AD 78–84,  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile west of this site, when Agricola, having advanced Roman rule into Scotland, established a series of forts to hold down the conquered territory. The first Roman fort at Corbridge followed very shortly after and, being sited at the junction of Dere Street, the road to Scotland, and Stanegate, running across to Carlisle, must have been of great importance.

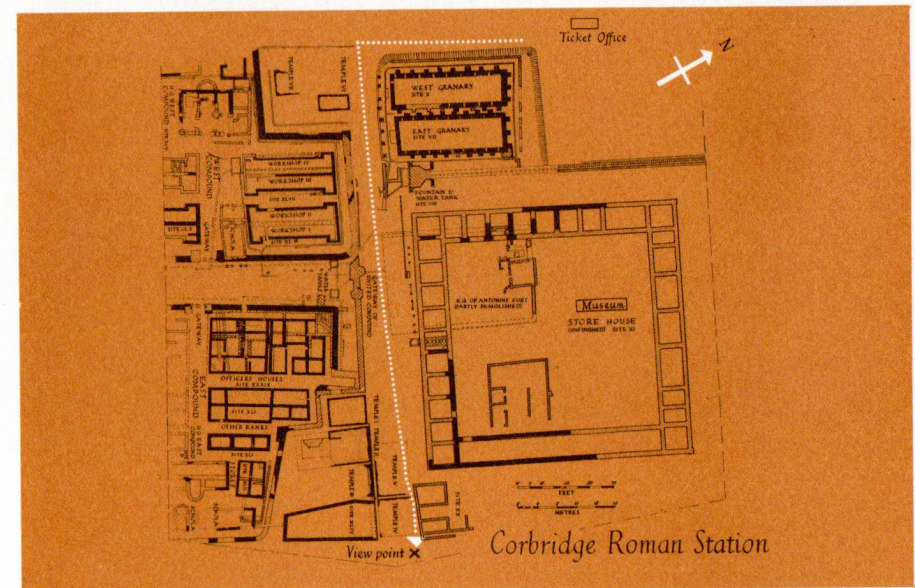
When it was decided to build a line of forts on Hadrian's Wall, Corbridge was evacuated. But in AD 139 when the Romans again advanced their frontier into Scotland, Corbridge was reoccupied, to retain its importance until the final withdrawal from Scotland. From then until the end of the Roman occupation of Britain it ceased to be a military fort and became a prosperous town, its market provided by troops manning the wall, for whom it was probably a leave centre.

From the ticket office, go forward past the old museum building and turn left into the main street (Stanegate) running through the excavated site. Go to the far end of this street to a wicket gate, then turn round and examine the site in the light of the reconstruction drawing. Immediately in front of you are the foundations of a series of temples. Beyond, on the right, are foundations of the storehouse built around a large courtyard. The whole was never finished, but its nearest part, facing Stanegate, was completed as shops on the lines shown in the drawing. Beyond this block are the two large granaries, whose underfloor ventilating systems can still be seen. Between the granaries and the row of shops was an elaborate fountain. Straight ahead on the left, on the other side of Stanegate, are two military compounds each surrounded by a high wall. Each had its headquarters building and its offices. Their occupants were legionary craftsmen, employed in the manufacture and repair of weapons and tools, and remains of one or two of the metal workers' hearths can still be seen in the further compound. This compound also contains a sunken strong room in its headquarters building.

The new museum, now housed in a temporary building in the centre of the Store House (site XI), contains many things found on the site—inscribed and sculptured stones, military equipment, tools of all kinds, pottery and glass, writing equipment, and games. One notable exhibit is the Corbridge Lion—a sculptured fountain head—discovered in the largest house excavated at Corbridge between the present site and the river. Another is a complete set of electrolyte reproductions of the largest hoard of Roman gold coins yet brought to light in Britain; the originals were found in a bronze jug on a site to the west of the present enclosure, and are now at the British Museum.



Corbridge



*CORBRIDGE is on the main roads from Newcastle upon Tyne to Hexham (A69) and from Darlington to Scotland by Carter Bar (A68). There is a frequent bus service from Newcastle and Hexham, and also a train service from these places. The Roman Station lies half a mile north-west of the modern town.*



Two casts from pottery moulds



## HOUSESTEADS FORT

The Roman fort at Housesteads was one of seventeen that housed the auxiliary regiments on Hadrian's Wall. It was surrounded by a stone wall, 4 or 5 ft thick and standing some 12 to 14 ft high. In addition to towers at intervals along the walls, there were four massive gateways flanked by guardrooms, each closed by double gates turning in pivot-holes, some of which are still in position. Behind the wall was a mound of earth, and between the mound and the barracks a roadway.

Outside the fort, to the south, in the third and fourth centuries there was a civil settlement occupied by the wives and children of the garrison as well as traders and retired soldiers.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries a building near the South Gate of Housesteads was the headquarters of a gang of horse-stealers and plunderers whose activities extended far south and north.

The fort is reached by climbing the hill past the remains of the civil settlement. Enter by the South Gate and turn right past the guardrooms. On the right at the end of the wall are the latrines (1) and the water tank (2), its sides scarred where the Romans sharpened their swords. Turn left up the hill to the East Gate (3) where the ruts in the sills were made by cart wheels. Continue up the hill to see the barrack buildings (4) on the left, then on to the North-East Tower where the Wall joins the fort (5). Below in the dip lies the Knag Burn Gate where there was a customs barrier. Follow the northern wall of the fort, turning left at the next opening to see the granary (6) with its underfloor ventilation. Go down the hill a few yards to the headquarters buildings (7), south to the Commandant's House (8), then NW a few paces to the Hospital Building (9), then westwards across the site to the West Gate (10). Outside the West Gate turn right up the hill to steps leading on to the Wall. Walk westwards along the Wall to Housesteads milecastle. Return across fields to the museum (11) where there are models of the site and a collection of items found in excavation.

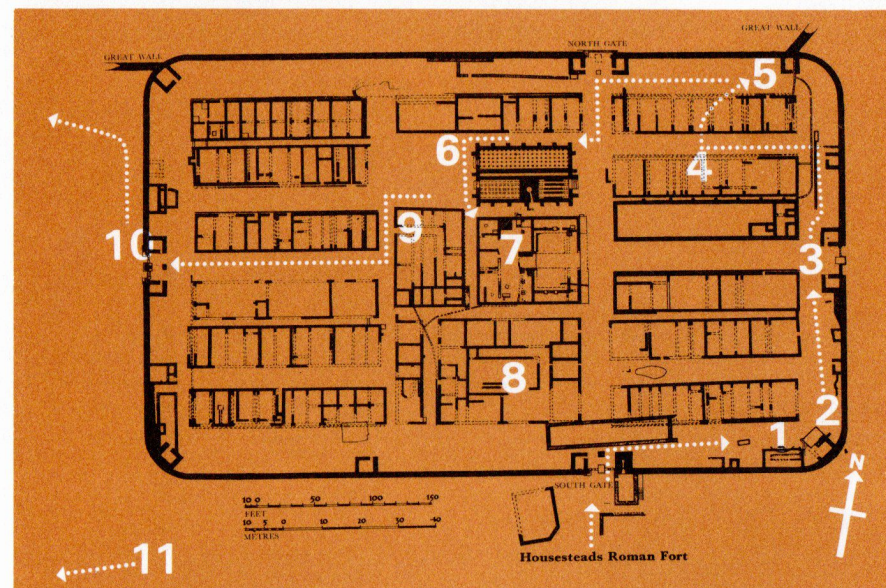
## HOURS OF ADMISSION

Housesteads Fort, Corbridge Roman Station and Chesters Roman Fort

	Weekdays	Sundays
March–April	09 30–17 30	14 00–17 30
May–September	09 30–19 00	09 30–19 00
October	09 30–17 30	14 00–17 30
November–February	09 30–16 00	14 00–16 00



Housesteads



**HOUSESTEADS FORT** is  $8\frac{1}{2}$  miles west of Chollerford on the North Tyne and 6 miles north-east of Haltwhistle on the South Tyne. It lies half a mile north of the road connecting these places. The nearest railway station is Bardon Mill, on the Newcastle to Carlisle line, and there are buses along the roads from Hexham and Newcastle.





## CHESTERS ROMAN FORT

The Roman fort of Chesters stands astride the Wall beside the North Tyne crossing. It was a cavalry fort garrisoned at one time by the Second Asturian Horse, a cavalry regiment 500 strong. The cavalry were the elite of the Roman Army, and accommodation for the commanding officer and men was much more imposing than that provided for an infantry battalion, as at Housesteads. About one-third of the fort, surrounded by its stone wall, projects northwards from the Wall, and the East and West Gates as well as the North Gate could be used by the cavalry for northward sorties. To allow for east and west traffic, smaller gates were built south of the Wall.

Outside the fort, but south of the Wall, is the finest specimen of a military bath-house to be seen in Britain. Below the bath-house, in the river bed, when water is low there can be seen remains of a Roman bridge abutment, and on the other side of the river the opposite abutment survives in a remarkable state of preservation. It can be reached by a footpath east of Chollerford Bridge (10).

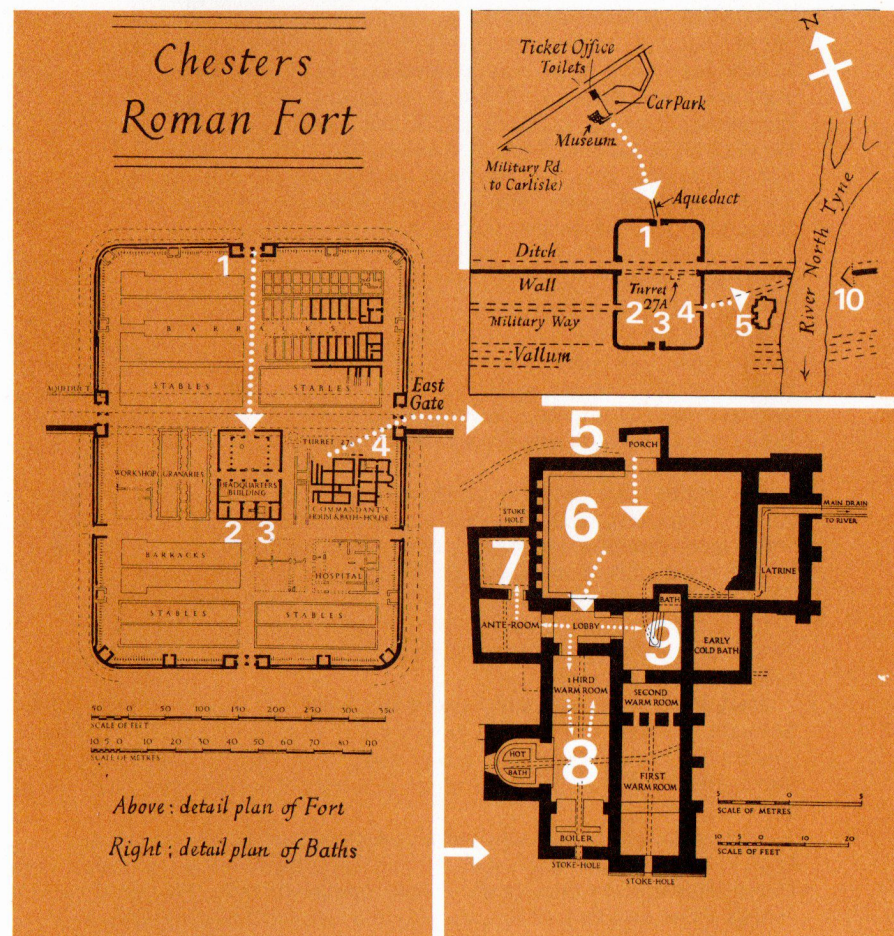
From the ticket office, go through the iron gate and across the field to the North Gate (1). Through the gate on the left are the foundations of two barrack blocks with stables south of them. Go straight forward to the remains of the headquarters building. This had a large flagged courtyard with a hall beyond it. Cross the courtyard and the hall to the Chapel of the Standards (2). To the right and left were pairs of rooms providing offices for the regimental adjutant and the standard bearer and their clerks. The standard bearer, who looked after the pay, had a strong room (3) which can still be seen. Turn left towards the river and walk through the commandant's house and bath-house with its underfloor heating system (4). On the walls, look for the flowering plant *erinus alpinus*, brought here by excavators last century, which flowers in May and June.

Go out of the enclosure past the East Gate to the Roman bath-house (5). Enter through the changing room (6) with its seven niches in the wall. Keep right and go through to see on the right the hot dry room (7) and the hot room (8) with its hot bath and boiler room at the end. On the left is a large warm room. Return towards the changing room and turn right to see the cold room with its bath (9).

Walk to the river to steps beneath the trees to see the bridge abutment under the water.

Return to the ticket office to visit the museum which contains one of the most important collections of Roman relics in Britain.

*CHESTERS FORT* lies on the west bank of the North Tyne, south of Chollerton-Walwick road (B6318), 5 miles north-west of Hexham. The East Bridge Abutment is on the opposite bank of the river,  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile south-west of Chollerford, and is reached by a footpath along the west side of the former railway line.







## HADRIAN'S WALL

This outstanding Roman antiquity goes back to the 2nd century of our era. The Romans invaded Britain in AD 43, but a generation passed before their troops, under the governor Petilius Cerealis, advanced into the territory of the Brigantes, which then ceased to be independent, and a new legionary base was established at York. Later again, under Agricola, governor AD 78-84, they moved into Scotland and fixed a temporary frontier between the Forth and the Clyde. To consolidate these conquests, they built a series of forts, the Roman roads of Dere Street (roughly the modern A68) and Stanegate, running between the Tyne and the Solway. But soon the Scottish line was given up, and Stanegate marked the limit of the Roman province.

The Emperor Hadrian visited Britain in AD 122, appointing a new governor, Aulus Platorius Nepos, and work began at once on his frontier defence system which we know as the Roman Wall.

At first the Wall was to be patrolled by frontier guards from the milecastles and turrets spaced at regular intervals, with infantry battalions and cavalry regiments housed in existing forts like Corbridge and new ones along the line of Stanegate. But while the Wall was being built, plans were changed and forts for these troops were built along the line of the Wall itself.

About the same time the earthwork known as the Vallum was added to the original scheme of Wall with a ditch in front of it. The Vallum was a steep flat-bottomed ditch with a mound on each side of it running at varying distances south of the Wall and its forts. It was crossed at the forts by stone causeways. Its probable purpose was to control movement from south to north, much as a modern customs zone would do. Between the Vallum and the Wall ran a military way linking the forts, milecastles and turrets.

Hadrian's Wall extended from Wallsend-on-Tyne to Bowness-on-Solway, a distance of 73 English or 80 Roman miles. The defensive system was continued with lesser forts and turrets organised in the same manner for another 40 miles down the Cumberland coast as far as St Bees Head.

The stone Wall was originally intended to be 10ft thick and 15ft high to the parapet walk, but was completed to lessened dimensions. From Wallsend to Newcastle it was narrower, from Newcastle to the North Tyne crossing at Chesters it was the full width, and from there to the River Irthing it was narrow again, but generally on broader

foundations. The western third of the Wall between the Irthing and Solway was originally built of turf, with timber milecastles and stone turrets, but that was superseded in a few years by a stone wall.

At regular intervals of 1 Roman mile (1620 yards) along the entire Wall stood a milecastle with a gateway through the Wall and barracks for two dozen men, some of whom would be detached in rotation for observation and signalling duty at neighbouring turrets. These small towers were sited every third of a Roman mile between the milecastles. In addition seventeen forts were ultimately constructed on or close to the Wall, each the permanent base of a cavalry regiment or infantry battalion either 1000 or 500 strong.

This system was not designed for a static defence but to allow vigorous counter-attacks to the north from the springboard of the Wall and its milecastles.

In AD 139 the Romans again advanced their frontier into Scotland, where the Antonine Wall was built between the Forth and the Clyde. Hadrian's Wall was less strongly held and Corbridge became an important supply depot. But after some 20 years the Romans withdrew from Scotland and Hadrian's Wall again became the frontier.

The Wall and its forts were overthrown on three occasions, in AD 197, 296, and 367, but it was reoccupied, and where necessary rebuilt, after each disaster. Its final history in the fourth century lies in the twilight of Roman Britain after the withdrawal of the legions.

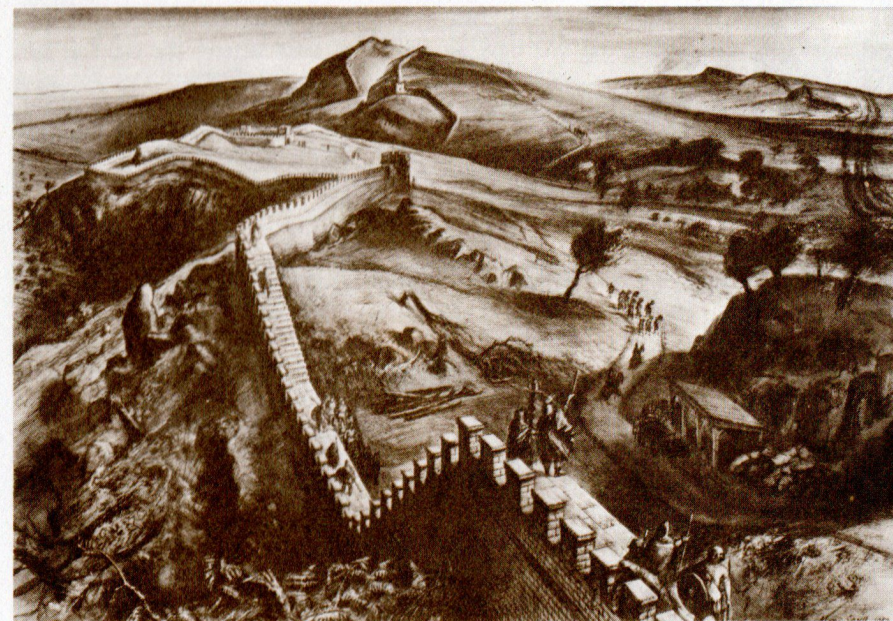
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The reconstruction drawings in this guide are by Alan Sorrell. The objects illustrated can be seen in the Corbridge Museum except the bust of Hadrian, which is in the British Museum.

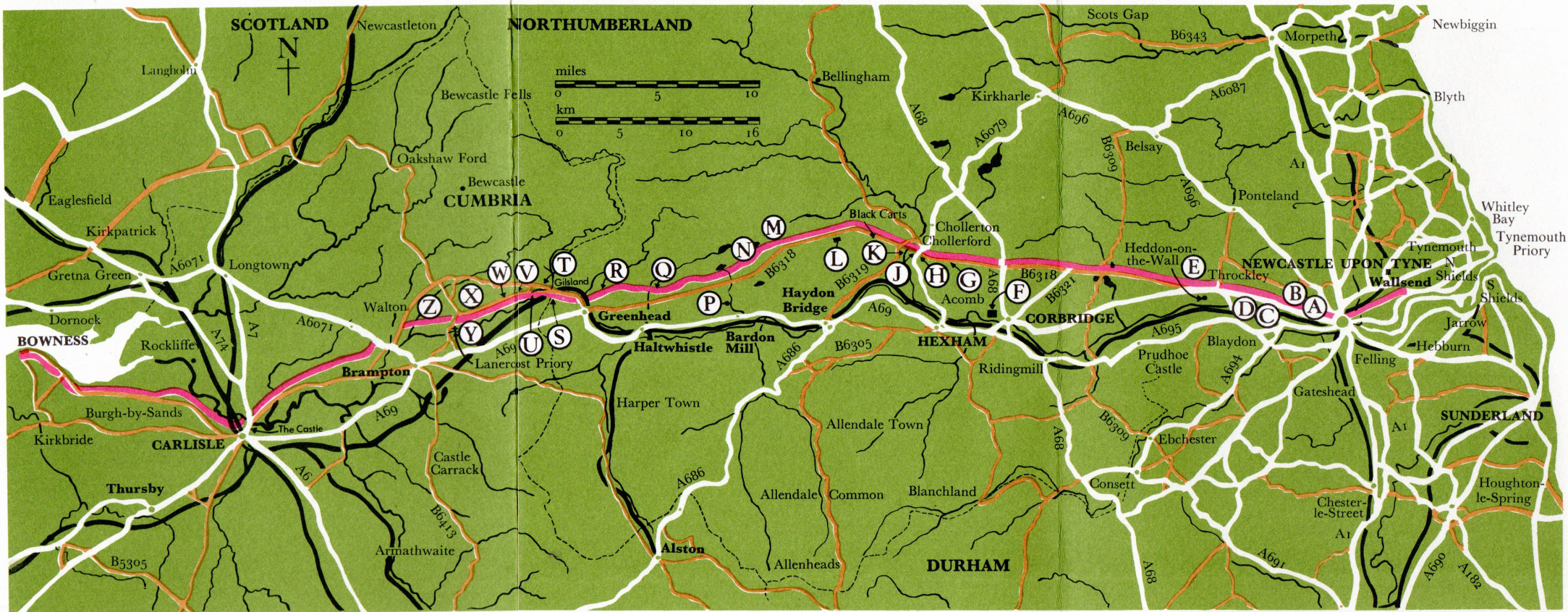
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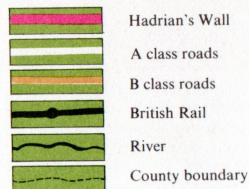
Reconstruction of Roman Wall at Walltown Craggs







Area covered by map above. Remains of the Wall are visible from Wallsend-on-Tyne in the east to Watton in the west. The Vallum continues to Bowness-on-Solway



A Benwell Vallum Crossing  
B Benwell Roman Temple  
C Denton Hall Turret  
D West Denton  
E Heddon-on-the-Wall  
F Corbridge Roman Station  
G Planetrees  
H Brunton Turret  
J Chesters Bridge Abutment  
K Chesters Fort  
L Carrawburgh, Temple of Mithras  
M Sewingshields

N Housesteads Fort  
P Vindolanda  
Q Winshields Milecastle  
R Walltown Crags  
S Poltross Burn Milecastle  
T Gilsland Vicarage Garden  
U Willowford turrets and bridge abutment  
V Harrow's Scar Milecastle  
W Birdoswald Fort  
X Piper Sike Turret  
Y Leahill Turret  
Z Banks East Turret

## WHERE TO SEE THE WALL

The best preserved turrets are at Denton Hall (C), Brunton (H), Black Carts, Banks East (Z). The best preserved milecastles are west of Housesteads at Harrow's Scar (V), Cawfields, Castle Nick. For forts on the Wall go to Chesters (K), Housesteads (N), Birdoswald (W). There are fine stretches of the Wall at Housesteads, Sewingshields (M), Walltown Crags (R), Gilsland to Willowford, and east of Birdoswald (W). For a Roman town and supply base go to Corbridge (F). There are museums at Corbridge (F), Chesters (K), Housesteads (N). There is a Temple of Mithras at Carrawburgh (L). There is a Temple of Antenocitus at Benwell (B).